

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND, INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES, AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

----- X

October 26, 2021
Start: 11:05 a. m.
Recess: 11:56 a. m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 4)

B E F O R E: Chair, Hon. Jimmy Van Bramer

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Laurie A. Cumbo
Darma V. Diaz
James F. Gennaro
Mark Gjonaj
Francisco P. Moya

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Council Member Diana Ayala
Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES
AND, INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

2

A P P E A R A N C E S

Gonzalo Casals,
Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural
Affairs

Marti Cummings,
Activist and Entertainer

Olive Daddi,
Translatinx Network

Tiffany Jade Munroe,
Trans Justice Coordinator for the Caribbean Equality
Project

SERGEANT LEONARDO: Pc recording is underway.

SERGEANT LUGO: Cloud recording is up.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Back up is rolling.

SERGEANT LUGO: Thank you.

Good morning everyone.

Welcome to today's remote New York City Council hearing of The Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations. At this time would panelist please turn on your videos?

To minimize disruptions, please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov, again that's testimony@council.nyc.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Chair we are ready to begin.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to today's hearing.

I am Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations.

Today we're considering three very important pieces of legislation aimed at addressing some incredibly timely and important issues, uh, surrounding our city, our nation, and indeed our... our world.

Uh, Introduction number 2203, uh, which I am proud to sponsor, and I'll talk a little bit more about later. Uh, it establishes, uh, the first ever Drag Laureate Program. And, I'm thrilled we have some folks here today to talk about how important, uh, this would be.

Resolution 1487, sponsored by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, is going to be heard today. And, that's in relation to recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York. Public Advocate Williams is with us, and will be speaking momentarily about these important, uh, issues.

Also, we're going to hear today Resolution, uh, 1543 sponsored by my colleague Council Member Dianna Ayala, in relation to calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113. And, I'm very

pleased that Council Member Ayala is here and will be speaking momentarily about this very important, uh, resolution.

So, speaking of my bill Intro 2203, which would establish the new Drag Laureate Program annually, The Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with The Director of The Office of Nightlife, would choose a Drag Laureate to act as an ambassador to local businesses and LGBTQ+ spaces and promote arts and culture in the city in a way that just hasn't been done.

Similar in cultural significance to that of a Poet Laureate, and the PAIR Artist in Residence Program, The Drag Laureate would serve to champion and to highlight contributions of The Drag Community, New York City's business, arts, and cultural spaces, and amplify the impacts of New York's LGBTQ+ community. I'm thrilled that we have some, uh, legendary activist, drag queens, and, uh, rock stars in our city who are testifying, uhm, momentarily on this bill.

Uh, but, I want to let my colleagues say a few words about their very important, uh, pieces of legislation. Again, thrilled that the Public

Advocate, uh, our Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams and, uh, Council Member Ayala, who put forward, uh, these pieces of legislation... But, uh, needless to say, uh, The Transgender Day of Remembrance and the Transgender Day of Visibility in the City -- are incredibly important.

Uh, we know we are still losing, uh, so many to violence, uhm, and we need, of course, uh, to demonstrate, every day, how wrong that is, and that it has to end.

But, also, we need to celebrate, uh, the trans community, uh, in ways that are joyful, and, uh, Jumaane Williams will speak to that in a moment.

And, of course, New York has a very, very special relationship, uh, Puerto Rico, and, uh, thrilled that, uh, our colleague Council Member Ayala has, uh, brought this forward, so we can speak about, uh, this important issue today,

Uh, all three bills, uh, move these conversations forward -- but, hopefully also move them forward to passage, uh, before the end of this year -- and emphasize the importance of embracing and understanding the critical roles that our identities, backgrounds, and heritage, uh, play in making New

York City what I believe is the greatest city in the world.

I want to thank, uh, the administration for being here today. We look forward to speaking with Commissioner Gonzalo Casals in a moment after we hear from our public advocate and Council Member Ayala.

And, I want to thank the community members and advocates who have joined us today, and want them to know we are grateful for your partnership.

Finally, I want to thank, uh, my staff, Legislative Director, Jack Bernatovicz, my Chief of Staff, Matt Wallace, and our committee staff, uh, Committee Counsel, Brenda McKinney, our Legislative Policy Analyst, Cristy Dwyer, and our Principal Financial Analyst, Aliya Ali.

Uh, and now, I would like to invite Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, uh, to speak to his important resolution.

PA WILLIAMS: Peace and blessings all. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Uh, as was mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, I'm the Public Advocate of the City of New York. Uh, I want to thank, again, Chairperson Van Bramer and Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries,

and International Intergroup Relations for holding this hearing on these three significant bills.

I'm proud, as mentioned, to sponsor Reso 1487, recognizing November 30th (***November 20th**) and March 31st respectively, as Transgender Day of Remembrance and Visibility in the city of New York.

This resolution has been the collaborate effort and work of our partners at The Office Public Advocates, who consistently work with us to engage in every way we can to address the plight of transgender New Yorkers' experience.

This resolution is a symbolic request that must be followed by a continued commitment from all of our elected officials to advocate for the trans community, particularly as we've seen the enactment and introduction of some of the most anti-trans legislation in our nation's history.

In 1999, trans advocate, Gwendolyn Ann Smith, organized a vigil to honor the memory of Rita Hester -- a Black trans woman in Boston now remembered as an ebullient, glamorous person -- following her violent and unsolved murder on November 28th, 1998.

Over two decades later, what we now know as Transgender Day of Remembrance or TDOR, annually

gives name and history to the many transgender people, worldwide, who have similarly and tragically been murdered or died.

Every year on November 20, organizations and organizers across the city gather to remember the lives of those who have been lost each year.

Each year remains a reminder that we all have to collectively work to seriously address the unique and violent experiences of trans gender and gender nonconforming New Yorkers.

We cannot say enough that without the leadership and organizing of so many trans people, the civil rights of all our communities would not be where we are now.

In response to the lacking positive recognition of this impact, trans activist, Rachel Crandall, launched International Transgender Day of Visibility. Now more than ever, increased visibility and organizing for trans lives remains crucial to addressing discrimination and systematic issues TDOR raises awareness of.

Earlier this year, President Biden followed suit in recognizing TDOR. While this is an opportunity to do so in New York, this resolution, again, must be

accompanied by continued collaboration with our trans New Yorkers to achieve equitable housing, workforce development, and education opportunities, and safety in the city.

I'll be the first to say that neither our partners or myself are satisfied with the work here, and believe our commitment must follow the passage of this resolution accordingly.

Recognizing the violence trans New Yorkers experience means we must commit to ending it. Uplifting the work and impact of trans New Yorkers means we must commit to expanding opportunities for the work and impact to be greater.

We in New York have led the country in legal rights and services for transgender New Yorkers, but this should not invite complacency in our role as leaders to find and address gaps in our duties.

Thank you to all the members of the Black Transwomen Roundtable here at The Office of Public Advocates, and our partners who constantly show us what it means to support and uplift New York's transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary community.

Thank you again, Chair Van Bramer, and The Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations for your time and equal commitment to creating a safer and more uplifting New York for transgender and gender nonconforming people. I'm grateful to sponsor this resolution, even more excited for the positive change to come.

Thank you for holding this hearing, uh, at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Public Advocate Williams, for your leadership and bringing this forward.

And, I do want to recognize our members of the committee who have joined us; uh, Council Member Mark Gjonaj and Council Member Darma Diaz are with us, and we will announce others as they arrive.

Uhm, Council Member Diana Ayala, would you like to speak to Resolution 1543?

COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Yes, thank you.

Good morning, uhm, and thank you, Chair Van Bramer for hearing this resolution today.

Uh, Resolution 1543 calls on congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-

Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 2070 originally introduced in 2020 as H.R. 8113 and co-sponsored by Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

H.R. 2070 recognizes the right of the people of Puerto Rico to call a status convention through which they would exercise their natural right to self-determination, and to establish a mechanism for congressional consideration of such decisions.

This bill establishes a process for the people of Puerto Rico to vote on the political status of the territory.

For too long, Puerto Ricans have been exposed to policies to that were not in the best interest of their well-being. The realities of this neglect have affected every aspect of Puerto Rican lives economically, politically, and environmentally.

The Self-Determination Act would allow Puerto Ricans the option to chart of course, uh, to change the destructive effect of colonization and allow for new leadership to oversee the process of decolonization.

Puerto Rico faces a myriad of challenges: Economic devastation, government mismanagement, and

dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Add to this, the agony of dealing with the current pandemic, which has caused additional loss of life and distress of over... of two-thousand families.

Inadequate assistance from the federal government and the inability for Puerto Rico to file for bankruptcy, further exacerbates the fiscal crisis and limits the tools it has to restore the healthy economy.

A path to a healthy and thriving economy should start with the voices of its residents. Now is the time to politically empower Puerto Ricans, for their voices to be heard, and to be granted the opportunity to decide to their path and vision for the future.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, uh, Council Member Ayala.

And, uh, before I hand it over to our counsel to administer the oath, I want to thank Commissioner Casals, uh, for being here, uh, and for his, uh, leadership in our city, both our cultural sector, uhm, and also, uh, our LGBTQ community of which he is a proud member.

Uh, so, with that, I will hand it over to our counsel.

MODERATOR: Hi, good morning. Thank you, Chair Bramer... Van Bramer.

I'm Cristy Dwyer, Legislative Policy Analyst to Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations of the New York City Council.

I will be moderating today's hearing and calling panelist to testify. Before we begin, I want to remind everyone that you'll be on mute until I call on you to testify, and after you are called upon you will be unmuted by the host. Please listen for your name as I will periodically announce who the next panelist will be.

Council member questions will be limited to five minutes. And council members, please note that this includes both your answers, your questions, and the witness's answers. And, please note that we will not allow a second round of questions at today's hearing.

For public testimony, I will call up individuals in panels; council members who have questions for a particular panelist should use the Raise Hand

Function in Zoom. You will be called on after everyone on that panel has completed their testimony.

For public panelists, once I call your name, a member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant At Arms will give you the go ahead to begin speaking after setting the timer.

All public testimony will be limited to two minutes. And, after I call your name, please wait a brief moment for the Sergeant At Arms to announce that you may begin before starting your testimony.

I will now call on the following members of the administration to testify.

Today we are happy to have with us Gonzalo Casals, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs.

I will deliver the oath to you, and after I will call on you to respond to the oath.

Please raise you're right hand, Commissioner, Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing by the truth, before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

COMMISSIONER CASALS: I do.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Commissioner. You may begin your testimony when ready.

COMMISSIONER CASALS: Uh, first of all, I want to apologize, uh, Chair Van Bramer, I know that you had an expectation of me showing up in drag this morning. I couldn't get, uhm, my outfit together for the hearing. Apologizes for that.

Good morning, Chair Van Bramer. I am Gonzalo Casals, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, here today to testify in regards to Intro 2203 of 2021 for establishment of a Drag Laureate.

I am in support of any effort to elevate and highlight art forms rooted in marginalized communities. Drag has a rich, and at times rocky history in New York City. It has provided a space for people to connect with... who are not welcome in large swaths of society. Even as drag is increasingly embraced by the mainstream, it is one of the few places that queer people can be unapologetically extra. But, it has also been stigmatized and even persecuted by authorities. So, I'm overjoyed by the idea of it being embraced and supported by our local government.

DCLA supports a number of organizations who work in the drag space, such as Drag Queen Story Hour, Les

Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, and spaces like House of Yes and Dixon Place. With the Village Halloween Parade making a triumphant return in just a few days, we'll see the glorious energy of the drag scene on full display.

We need to be cautious not to conflate the drag scene with our entire LGBT community. We have come a long way in recent decades to recognizing the full breadth of our trans community, which was once referred to as "drag" by a mainstream looking to dismiss trans people. And, true drag itself is often dominated by cisgender men.

I've been excited to see these barriers broken down in recent years, and any laureate program would need to reflect the increasingly inclusive and equitable definition of the art form -- one that embraces trans people, people of color, people with disabilities, people of all ages, and every background.

Nothing more empowering than seeing yourself reflected in society. Elevating this art form will help New Yorkers think about gender in and breaking down rigid binaries. That's why I'm delighted and excited by the prospect of New York having a Drag

Laureate, and hope that it marks the start of additional ways for our city to embrace and elevate art forms by and for marginalized communities.

I look forward to working with you toward a Drag Laureate Program befitting our city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, uh, Casal... Uh, Commissioner Casals, uh, for, uh, your testimony here today and, uh, your support of course of establishing a Drag Laureate Program. Uhm, I appreciate you being here.

And, uhm, you know, I think that there are some folks who wonder about the importance and the significance of such a program. And, uhm, of course there are so many important issues that we're faced with in our society, and we are rightfully focused on justice and equity.

Maybe you can, uh, speak, uhm, a little bit more. You... You've certainly highlighted a bit in your testimony. But, to anyone who might be saying, like, why is the city council taking this up? Why is this important, uh, and, uh, and how might it actually be transformational?

COMMISSIONER CASALS: I think it's important, I want to highlight it. I've mentioned it many times in my testimony. First of all, uhm, we should consider it as an art form. Right? And, usually the art... The art forms that have been created by marginalized groups are sometimes not taken seriously. Right? They are not high art -- low art -- you name it.

Uhm, but second of all, like any, uh, any art form, any cultural experience, uhm, the minute that you see society reflecting who you are -- reflecting your experiences -- reflecting, you know, how you feel, uhm, you get this incredibly empowering feeling that you matter, that you exist, and that you are part of a larger community. The most effective way to alienate a person, uh, a whole community, is by denying the reflection in society. And, that has been happening with many marginalized groups, including, you know, the LGBTQ community. And, within the LGBTQ, uhm, those are breaking the gender binary.

Uhm, again, I don't want to conflate, you know, the art form with the, uh, gender identity. But, uhm, it is a way to start showing newer generations

that, uh, you know, the gender binary is not as, uhm, strict, and it could be broken down.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: And, how do you see it being helpful in terms of, uh, amplifying support for, uhm, the LGBTQ and, uh, and other sectors, uh, the business sector: Bars, restaurants, clubs, nightlife? Uhm, and how there's an ecosystem there that this position could be an important part of?

COMMISSIONER CASALS: As you mentioned on your intro, we have seen over and over again how arts and culture can be an engine for economic development. Could be a way to not only mirror, as I was saying, one's experiences, but also being a window to the other. And, uhm, we've seen enough (INAUDIBLE 20:02) drag, uh, in the past, I'm sure Chair Van Bramer, right? You know, nothing gets more attention than a loud, uhm, drag, uhm, you know, performer. Just really making sure that, uh, you know, uhm, the same freedom in which they perform, is conveyed those that are seeing them. And, just them being able to, uhm, have somebody that has been designated by, uh, the local government, and just given that platform, I think it will be incredibly helpful to support, uhm,

the nightlife. And, again, uhm, it isn't only about nightlife; it's about the art form itself.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I think one of the most exciting things for me is the ability to amplify and elevate, uhm, the art form, and, uh, the community of people who are experts, uhm, and, uh, and real crafts persons in this arena. And, uh, I know Marti and others, uhm, have, uh, done incredible work. And, I think, uh, this would be, uh, transformational really in putting the city of New York, uhm, putting, uh, its own stamp -- right? -- in saying this is really important. This really matters, uhm, and it matters so much that we're going to actually designate a Drag Laureate for the city of New York.

COMMISSIONER CASALS: And, one of the most joyful moments, at least for me, uh, in the calendar of the city of New York, is the Friday before the Pride Parade, uhm, The Drag March, in which, again, you see so much happiness, so much freedom, so much, uhm, ,you know, uhm, community. That, uh, I could only imagine if we expand that -- and yearlong -- by having this laureate, uh, individual, uhm, sort of

promoting our community, our businesses, and our culture.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yeah, we... We all certainly need a little more joy, uhm, in our lives. But, also the ,you know, the movement oriented art from that drag is in so many ways, uhm, would be what actually increases, uhm, space for people to simply be -- Right? -- Uhm, however they come to this space and identify and live within it. Right? Uhm, this position has that ability to help do that for so many people.

Uhm, and, I appreciate that. I know you, uh, are not here to speak to the other two pieces of legislation, uhm, because they don't fall particularly within, uh, The Department of Cultural Affairs realm and I guess (INAUDIBLE 23:05) to, uhm, get your thoughts on those. Uh, but, uh, if you wanted to say anything about the Trans, uh, resolutions, uhm, uh, certainly free to. But, uh, I know...

COMMISSIONER CASALS: I mean, personally, I can... I support a 100 percent, you know, the resolution as a member of the LGBTQ community. From a cisgender man and an ally of the, uh, trans community, uhm, I

will have to leave, uhm, the administration to speak, you know, officially on the two other resolutions.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Commissioner, uhm, appreciate your, uhm, you're being here, and, uhm, just you being you. Uhm, and, uh, it would have been fun to see you in drag for this, uhm, hearing, but uh, we still have a couple more to go. So, uh, maybe both of us can show up. Uhm, but, uhm, Marti... Marti would have a lot of work to do, uh, to get, uh, you and I into, uh, a proper situation where we could proudly represent. Uhm, so, uh, but, uh, but, thank you.

Uhm, and, uh, speaking of which, I know that we have, uh, an incredible lineup of folks who would like to speak to, uh, the bills and resolutions. And, I'll ask our counsel to, uh, invite the public to testify now.

COMMISSIONER CASALS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Chair Van Bramer. Uhm, before we move to public testimony, I just want to make sure that we're, uh, not bypassing any members of the council who may want to ask any questions. Uh,

I don't see any hands raised, but wanted to provide that opportunity to them before moving forward.

Okay, seeing no council members waiting to ask questions, we will move on to the public panel.

Uh, now that we've concluded the administration's testimony, uh, for members of the public, please note that I will call up individuals and panels. Council members who have questions for you will use the Zoom Raise Hand Function, and you will be called on after every one in the panel has completed their testimony. Uhm, council members who have questions for a particular panelist, as I said will use the Zoom Raise Hand Function.

Panelists, once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant At Arms will give you the go ahead to begin after setting a timer. All testimony will be limited to two minutes. And, please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may begin before starting your testimony.

Our panel today is Marti Cummings, followed by Olive Daddi, Tiffany Munroe, and apologies if I mispronounced anyone's names.

Uh, Marti Cummings, if you're ready, can you wait for the council to put... the sergeant to call the clock, and you can begin your testimony, thank you.

MARTI CUMMINGS: Uh, good morning everyone...

(Cross-Talk)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MARTI CUMMINGS: Uhm, good morning. My name is Marti Cummings, and my pronouns are they/them/theirs/I.

Strongly support Intro, uhm, 2203. A Drag Laureate, uh, role in our city would validate the art form of drag. Drag is an art form that has no box to hold it in. It is for all genders, sexual orientations, races, identities, economic backgrounds, religious backgrounds. Drag is for everyone. And, it's an art form that not only supports so many businesses, but it's an art form that helps to teach and educate people.

I have the great honor of, uhm, working with Drag Queen Story Hour, which I know the city council is very familiar with. And, uh, during a Ted Talk several years ago, about the importance of using drag to spread joy, especially to our young people, so they feel seen, heard, that they feel accepted.

Drag is not some fringe, silly art form. It is a real way for people to express themselves through music, theater, dance, comedy. The list goes on and on. And, especially as we come out the pandemic, a Drag Laureate, uh, would be someone who can help our businesses get back on their feet. Help our artist find ways to support themselves and their loved ones. I think it's a crucial program, and it's not one that is new or unique. West Hollywood just implanted it. San Francisco is looking in to. But, we as the largest city in the country, can set the bar, implement, uh, 2203, have this program, and then show other cities how you can incorporate drag in to city government.

Uhm, and I am proud to support his bill, and, uhm, will fight tooth and nail to get it.

So, thank you for... (Cross-Talk)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MARTI CUMMINGS: for having me.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Marti, and you perfectly met your mark as you always do. Uhm, literally to minutes to the second... (Cross-Talk)

MARTI CUMMINGS: I was watching the clock.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Uh, so, you know, we've talked a little bit about businesses and small businesses and how, uh, this program, uh, might help, uh, and I think it would.

But, as you know, uh, because, I... I... I've seen you post recently about... I think you posted how many performances, uhm, you've done in your career, uhm, as you were traveling, I think, the country recently. And, know, it made me think that, you know, this program could also help solidify in people's mind that drag is an art form, and drag performers are artist, who are working artist, who need to be paid, uh, for their art.

And, so, it's going to help small businesses for sure, uh, because drag performances often bring people in, and are something that, uhm, you know, packs the house.

Uhm, but, speak a little bit about it as something that respects drag artists and performers, and could actually make sure that folks getting paid and getting paid well, uh, for the art form.

MARTI CUMMINGS: Uh, I mean, that's, uh, a really important point. And, you know, I, uh, several years ago, was appointed by the speaker to serve on the

Nightlife Council -- advisory council -- and one of the things that we did was really worked to ensure, uhm, that the proposals we were sending the city council highlight artist like drag artists, who experience wage theft, who experience, uhm, lack of resources, access to healthcare, access to paid time off and paid sick leave. But, these are workers who show up day in and day out, providing huge revenue streams for their businesses, and we're seeing now it's not just queer spaces that are hiring drag artists, it runs the gambit, because people have caught on to drag makes them, uhm, money.

So, we want to make sure that those drag artists are being paid a true liveable wage, that they have access to services, uh, that other workers have. And, I think having a Drag Laureate would be somebody who could really talk to businesses, along with our city government, to advocate for workers. The same we're advocating for other gay workers across the city, our nightlife workers and drag artists are folks who really need access to that. And, you know, we're out there doing our jokes, and our kicks and our splits, and making people entertained. But, we need to make sure that we're provided for as well.

And, I think that this is a crucial program that can be that kind of link to the businesses to really sit down to the table and talk about, uhm, we're helping your business, now you help us as artists.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I... I... I, uhm, recently did a Drag Queen Story Hour Program with, uhm, Bella Noche, who I love. Uh, done several events with Bella. And, uhm, and we were on Skillman Avenue in Sunnyside, and Bella had just finished, and the kids were all... Uh, had already taken their photos and everyone was happy. And, it was just a glorious thing. And, uh, I turned to Bella and, I said, "How are you getting home? Like, are you... Are you good?" Like, and, uhm, and Bella said, "Girl, I got to go to work. I've got another gig right after this." Right? "Because this is not the end of my day. I am going to do some more shows and more gigs." Uh, and it just reminds you how hard folks are working and how many gigs they might doing in a particular day. Uhm, and it's just incredibly important for us to respect that.

MARTI CUMMINGS: Yeah, I'll end with this, you know, drag artists, dj's, go-go dancers, whatever the nightlife gambit, we don't have a union that

represents us. We advocate for ourselves. And, so, it's really, really crucial that our city government, uh, has someone who... Now, I love The Office of Nightlife; I love the advisory board; I love the work that's being done around that, but we really need to make sure that the gig workers who are kind of considered on the fringe are brought to the table, so they're provided for. Because, a lot drag artist... I have so many friends, uh, who, through their drag, are not only paying their own bills, but sending money home to their families. Sending money home to their loved ones to make sure that they're taken care of. And, uh, we rely heavily, not just on the often small booking fee that's provided, but through a tipped culture. And, so, it's really, really imperative, uhm, I believe that The Drag Laureate Program not only spread goodwill and cheer throughout the city -- and joy -- but really be a role that can advocate for these workers who are workers and artists. Their art is their work. Uhm, and, I'm just... I'm... I'm super proud that our city is even having this discussion.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, uh, Marti, I appreciate, obviously, your contributions in so many

ways, in so many spaces, but, uh, especially being here today, uh, as an advocate.

And, I'll hand it back over to our moderator to call up on the next panelist.

MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Marti Cummings, for your testimony.

Uh, next we'll be hearing from Olive Daddi, and you may begin delivering your testimony once the sergeant calls the clock. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

OLIVE DADDI: Thank you, uhm, Olive Daddi, Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to give testimony in support of Resolution 1487. My name is Olive Daddi, I use the pronouns they and them, and I am here to testify on behalf of myself and Translatinx Network, which is a community based organization in District 3 in Chelsea, where we serve the transgender, gender non-conforming, otherwise LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities of the city.

Speaking on behalf of Translatinx Network, we hope that Resolution 1487 is passed, because we want to see more people in this city celebrating and cherishing trans lives, especially the lives of Black and Latina transgender women, who have always and

continue to lead the fight for our rights to live safely and authentically in this city.

For the past ten years at Translatinx Network, has held a gathering every November to honor the lives of our siblings who have been taken away from us, and another one every March to honor the brilliance of our identities and our community.

We will be gathering again next month on November 19th from 6-8 p. m. at St. Bart's Church in Midtown East, if anyone would like to attend and see, uhm, exactly what we're talking about in this resolution.

Speaking personally as a queer and transgender person, I would not have the civil rights, the language and vision for my sense of self, or the community I have today without the unrelenting work of Black and Latinx trans activists, artists, and organizers, such as the people I am really lucky to work with. However, when I am able to exercise the rights that we have gained, it's often the racial privilege that I have as a white person that opens the door first. Uhm, and many Black and Latina women who have always lead this fight are still systematically disenfranchised and murdered in all of the reasons that this resolution talks about. Uhm,

and I can say, with visibility, when media comes out about us, uhm, it many times is portraying trans masculine people who look like me. Uhm, so, we need more visibility for Black and Latino women.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Did you want to finish up, Olive?

OLIVE DADDI: Sure, thank you.

Yeah, all of that is just to say we hope that this resolution is passed, uhm, to celebrate the people who are here, and to remember the people that we've lost. But, we both hope that -- me and Translatinx Network, uhm, are hoping that with the passage of this resolution, uhm, the city makes an effort to specifically resource and amplify Black and Latinx trans leaders, uhm, sort of in line with all of the work that they've done.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, uhm, so very much, uh, for your testimony, for your, uh, for your work. Uhm, and, thanks for being here today. Uh, needless to say, I support, uh, the resolution. Uhm, but, uhm, as you point out, a resolution not, uh, the end. Uhm, it is... It is a moment. Uh, it is important, uhm, but, uh, what has to follow through

is the resources and the actual, uhm, commitment on the part of the city of New York, uh, to do all the things that we know it must do.

Uhm, so, maybe you can, uh, speak to, uh, why it's important to pass the resolution. Because, the resolution itself is, uh, doesn't provide funding. Right? It doesn't, uh... uh... Uh, do, uh, some of the things that, uh, pieces of legislation or bills do. But, uh, I believe this is very important. I believe you believe this is very important, but maybe you can speak to why it is so important to pass the resolution.

OLIVE DADDI: Sure, uhm, so, in order for us to have these days recognized in this city, uhm, as citywide holidays or just days that we are all aware of, uhm, it, one sort of brings just more attention to these conversations. Uhm, it's two somewhat separate conversations, but that are very related to each other.

So, we need more attention towards the way that our communities are experiencing violence. Uhm, but we also need more attention to the ways in which that is not our only narrative, and we are whole people,

uhm, and we deserve to be seen that way and celebrated.

Uhm, so, it's important to pass this resolution, because we want more people just to know that we're here, and we belong to the city. This city is our home. Uhm, we want to be recognized by this city, and want, you know, people to join us, like, to join our community in celebration in honoring our lives. Uh, and we want to create as many opportunities as possible for that to happen.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Uh, thank you, uh, Olive and obviously, uhm, I am also a gay man. I am a cisgender white gay man. Uhm, uh, so, I too share, uhm, some of those privileges that you spoke about, unearned as they may be.

But, I also remember as a kid, uhm, watching the movie *Dog Day Afternoon*, which is in bold reference perhaps, but, uh, but I remember watching that movie as a little boy, uhm, and seeing the, uh, unflattering and tragic representation of queer people. And, uh, I internalized that even at that very young age, knowing that that's who I was, uhm, but knowing that that's not what I wanted to be,

because they were portraying the queer people in that film in such an unflattering and tragic way.

OLIVE DADDI: Uhm, yeah, absolutely. Uhm, I...
Yes, I know exactly what you're talking about. Uhm,
and I guess part of what you're speaking to is we...
We should be the people who are presenting our image.
I don't want to see any more representations of trans
people by people who hate us. I want to see trans
people portrayed and represented by our community and
by our allies and people who love us and want us to
thrive.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Yes, and same.

Thank you very much, uh, Olive, uh, for being
here.

Uhm, and I will turn it over to the moderator for
our next panelist.

MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your testimony.
Olive.

Our final panelist is Tiffany Monroe. Uh,
Tiffany, you begin delivering your testimony one the
sergeant calls the clock. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

TIFFANY JADE MUNROE: Thank you so much, everyone for allowing me to come here and testify under resolution 1497.

Uhm, my name is Tiffany Jade Munroe. I am the Trans Justice Coordinator for the Caribbean Equality Project, a Queens-based community organization that empowers, advocates for, and represents Black and Brown, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and queer Caribbean immigrants in New York City.

I am here to testify on the importance of recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance, and March 31 annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York.

At the Caribbean Equality Project, we are thrilled that the city wants to recognize these two annual community-focused days centered on honoring and celebrating transgender and gender-expansive people. However, we wish to acknowledge the significance of why trans activists first created these days.

There is an epidemic of anti-transgender violence and erasure in New York City, and across the country, that disproportionately impacts Black trans women and

trans women of color, particularly immigrants, asylum seekers, sex workers, and refugees.

Since 1999 and prior years, Black and Brown people of trans experience have been murdered in record and traumatizing numbers. The list of my killed trans siblings grows longer and longer year by year with no end in sight to transphobic-related violence These senseless and brutal killings must stop! I say this to you as a scared Black trans woman who fears her name will one day be added to a *SAY THEIR NAMES LIST*.

The transgender community is systemically ignored, erased, and forgotten about by our families, communities, and government.

These days are important, and we need it due to the staggering amounts of violence inflicted on my community.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

TIFFANY JADE MUNROE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Uh, feel free to finish, uh, Tiffany. Anything else you... Keep going.

TIFFANY JADE MUNROE: Oh, yes. Yes, uh, sorry.

New York City should undoubtedly recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance and Transgender Day of

Visibility, but I also want to remind our elected officials that the city has tremendous power and life-saving resources to offer trans people.

If New York City wants trans people to be visible, it needs to put us first in its efforts to create a safer and healthier city.

Since New York City wants to recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day dedicated to mourning and remembering my murdered trans siblings, the city should also invest more money into affordable housing to keep Black and Brown trans people safe. We deserve city-wide recognition and more robust laws to end workplace discrimination, access to affirming healthcare options, and immigration services to protect undocumented transgender people and asylum seekers.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, uh, Tiffany, for that powerful, powerful, uh, testimony. And, I could see, uh, Marti, Olive, and Gonzalo, uh, nodding their heads at... as I was.

Uhm, first of all, let me just say, The Caribbean Equality Project is one of my favorite, uh, organizations. Absolutely...

TIFFANY JADE MUNROE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: I love... I love, love, the work, uh, being done, uhm, there. And, uh, I have been out Ozone Park and other parts of Queens, uh, with The Caribbean Equality Project. Uhm, just doing great work in Queens and throughout the city.

Uhm, and, you know, it was devastating, uhm, to hear you talk about the fear of being, uhm, added to that list, uh, which is already far too long, uhm, of in particular Black and Brown trans folks, uh, who've been, uh, killed. And, the truth is, as Olive and I spoke a little bit about earlier, uh, this is important. We need to pass this resolution, but it is just the beginning. It is just the beginning. It alone does not make everyone safe. Uhm, it alone doesn't provide all of those resources, uh, that we know are needed. Uh, but it is... It is, uh, the least we could do in so many ways. Right? The least we could do is pass, uh, this resolution.

So, uh, I'm grateful for your courage, uhm, and your emotional testimony here today, uh, which is a reminder to all of us, uh, that we have so much more to do, uhm, so much more to do.

Is there anything else you would like to add,
Tiffany?

TIFFANY JADE MUNROE: Uhm, I just want to thank
you guys so much for this opportunity. Uhm, you
know, I came to this country as a gay man. Uh, I
came all the way from Guyana, South America. And,
,you know, coming to the United States made me, uhm,
be my beautiful self -- the person that I am.
Because, in the Caribbean, you know, the
discrimination is on the next level. And, I could
not have been a transgender woman there. And, coming
here and being with The Caribbean Quality Project has
allowed me to, uhm, experience new stuff. Be who I
am. And, uhm, it is tough since, you know, I'm
undocumented, and, uhm, I'm still awaiting the
government to, uh, sort that stuff out, because I am
an asylum seeker. And, you know, I live with my
transphobic aunt, who is a terrible person. But, I
just wanted to be here and be safe, and no mind the
conditions I am in, I still have that sense of that
safe space.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Mmm! Uh, thank you for
sharing, uhm, that, Tiffany, and, uh, thank you
reminding all of us, uhm, of why we're here in

government and what we must do while we're in positions of any power. And, I know that, uh, Commissioner Casals, uhm, feels that obligation and responsibility as well.

Uhm, so, thank you very much again, uh, Tiffany, for your courage.

Uhm, I am told that Council Member Francisco Moya has joined, and that Council Member Diaz, uhm, would like to, uhm, speak and ask a question.

Council Member Diaz?

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: (NO RESPONSE)

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Oh! We have to unmute you. There we go...

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Am I muted now? Okay...

(Cross-Talk)

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: No, you're good. We can hear you now.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Just wanted to commend the panelists for sharing your stories. Putting yourself out there is a big deal. You know? And just know that Darma Diaz, which leads the council, will continue to support your agenda. And, Darma Diaz, The Chair of Women, Gender, and Equity, definitely stands with you.

So, Tiffany, you mentioned housing. Housing is a human right. And, I will also continue to advocate for housing. Because, again, it's a human right.

And, at the beginning of our conversation on a more silly note, we were talking about the Chair and the Committee on coming in dressed in drag. I welcome, I want to see some performances. I'd be a liar and not be generous to say that I've attended many drag shows. And, I take my friends. I've had a blast.

Thank you for your service, because it's great; it's brought much cheer to me and many of my friends.

So, I welcome to be invited to a few shows as well. Yes. That is all... (Cross-Talk)

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: You're Welcome.... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Council Member Diaz. Uhm, and, uh, it is very meaningful to have, uh, other council members, uh, indeed recognizing, uh, the courage, uh, and, uhm, the incredible bravery of our panelist to speak their truth and, uh, share their stories.

COUNCIL MEMBER DIAZ: Oh, absolutely. As a domestic violence survivor, I know it hurts when you have to open yourself up and relive every occurrence. So, thank you. Thank you again. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you Council Member Diaz.

I recognized Council Member Moya, correct? Uh, are there any other, uh, council members that we need to recognize?

Madam Moderator?

MODERATOR: At this point we have concluded public testimony, Chair Van Bramer. However, if we've inadvertently missed anyone, either a council member or panelist who we didn't get to, please use the Zoom Raise Hand Function, and we will call on you in the order that your hand is raised.

Uh, seeing no one else, I would like to note that written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by the committee staff, may be submitted to the record up to seventy-two hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov .

And, Chair Van Bramer, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing. So, back to you to close.

CHAIRMAN VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, uh, to, uh, all of the, uhm, team members who had a hand in putting together this hearing, including our, uh Sergeants At Arms, and, uh, a special, special thanks again to Marti, Olive, and Tiffany, uhm, for being here today and being such incredible people and advocates and activists and artists.

So, thank you.

And, with that, this hearing is concluded, but our work is far from done.

Thank you all very much.

UNKNOWN: Congratulations, Christy

CRISTY DWYER: Thank you all. I appreciate it.

(Hearing Concluded)

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 17, 2021